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October 25, 1962

TO: S/P - Mr. Walt W. Rostow

FROM: G/PM - Raymond L. Garthoff

**SUBJECT: Concern over the Course and Outcome of the Cuban Crisis**

I am increasingly disturbed over indications that in all of our planning for the development of the Cuban crisis we have to our peril neglected one particular contingency: that the Soviets would react mildly and with great caution. A week ago we were concerned about strangulation of West Berlin, missile firings and exchanges of cities within the US and USSR, and other drastic and dangerous possibilities. Now the danger that looms large is not exchange of cities, but exchange of bases—at the extreme, the unhinging of our whole overseas ~~base~~ and alliance structure. It would be a remarkable thing if the Soviets were able to make substantial gains in achieving their main objective of weakening the alliances militarily and politically simply by exhibiting caution and indecision in the face of our initial stand. I can think of nothing that would more encourage the Soviets to create new Cubas and new distant military bases and local conflicts than would a net gain from their Cuban venture.

I am, as you know, in fullest accord with the objectives so resolutely outlined in the President's address. Yet I can not escape the conclusion that unintentionally we may be moving in a direction which in the eyes of Moscow, the American people, and history could make mockery of the statement that "further steps" may be necessary; it was presumed, of course, there would be further steps forward if they were necessary to achieve the objective of the "withdrawal or elimination" of the missile bases in Cuba. But a rush to find assurances that we can offer to achieve this objective could, to change the expression in Lenin's phrase, mean "one step forward, two steps backward."

Diplomacy is vastly to be preferred to direct military action, so long as it can achieve our objectives. That it is sometimes necessary to brace our diplomatic stand by resort to carefully considered military measures is, of course, manifest in the quarantine action itself. There

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are also still available means of increasing the pressure which we can bring to bear on the other side short of direct military action, in particular, broadening the blockade or commando raids on the missile bases. But any irresolution in enforcing the present quarantine, or in accepting a "freeze" on the present situation (thus closing off all options for intensifying pressure), or premature indications that we would "trade" other bases, would weaken greatly such strength as we now have to bring to bear in negotiation.

At the time of the President's address, and perhaps still today, the Soviet leaders have probably been quite uncertain as to whether the "initial step" was in fact only the first of a "one-two punch." Their caution to date has been a result of this uncertainty. But this is a wasting asset, if indeed not already a wasted one. When they realize the other shoe is not going to drop, they are likely to be emboldened in their actions and certain to raise their price in negotiations. If we seem to display a certain fear in our own actions, Soviet fear of these actions cannot fail to be lessened.

The terms for eventual negotiation might well include some given by the United States as well as by the USSR. But unless we are very careful, the business of letting the Soviets "save face" may come to involve losing our arm. The Soviets simply will not expect the United States to be offering concessions at a time when they have brought no counterpressure to bear on us in response to the quarantine. Any such indication (and the press is already rife with such rumors of trading off bases in Turkey, etc.) will mean to Moscow only that the United States is not prepared to compel the retraction of Soviet offensive power from the Western Hemisphere. One doesn't buy what is already his. If we concede that we must purchase the Soviet withdrawal, we undermine our right to compel it. The longer we haggle over terms, the more this is so. Moreover, the Soviets may be able to "sell" their missile bases in Cuba several times over. They can play us along on a deal exchanging Turkey for Cuba and then insist on broadening it out to include more and more United States bases—having already achieved most of their purpose simply by stimulating lack of confidence in the US military establishment. The missile bases in Turkey and Italy are not militarily important; this is, however, almost irrelevant. The Turks and Italians have already shown alarm at unofficial indications of

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possible trade-off, and this alarm will both deepen and spread out to other areas, no matter how we seek to present the case in terms of suddenly acknowledged obsolescence and of renewed efforts to provide more modern long-range missile support from other locations and by multilateral agreements. There is a real danger that some of our Allies may believe that the United States is not only excessively concerned about the military threat to itself, but also that it is prepared to sacrifice some elements of its power and of its commitment to them in order to allay a selfish concern about a base near our shores.

I believe that the United States should make very clear that our objective remains the dismantling of present offensive bases in Cuba. We should emphasize our continuing readiness to discuss broader disarmament and other arrangements; and also our willingness to permit a United Nations presence to monitor the dismantling of existing offensive bases—but without raising the quarantine before the patient is cured. Discussions in a Summit meeting or other appropriate diplomatic interchange would almost certainly have to involve broad questions such as nuclear non-diffusion. However, it seems to me that we should approach such negotiations from a position of strength rather than a feeling of weakness. If we maintain the original resolve to use whatever means are necessary, though not more than are necessary, to effect the withdrawal of Soviet striking power from Cuba, I believe that the Soviets will in fact recognize that the United States does have the high cards.

cc: G - Mr. Johnson  
G/PM - Mr. Kitchen

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